



 PERRYUNDEM
RESEARCH/COMMUNICATION

Messaging about Drug Pricing

January 24, 2020 Families USA



Sources

- PerryUndem recently conducted 3 focus groups (two with moderate/lean Democrat voters) and one with Republican voters) in Denver (11/4) and Newark (11/7) on drug pricing for Families USA (11/2019).
- Recent polling by Kaiser Family Foundation on drug pricing.
<https://www.kff.org/slideshow/public-opinion-on-prescription-drugs-and-their-prices/>
- A bipartisan poll by The Hill. <https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/445401-voters-are-angry-about-prescription-drug-costs>

Polling Snapshot: Drug Pricing

79% say the cost of prescription drugs is unreasonable.

3 in 4

think drug companies have a lot of responsibility for the high cost of prescription drugs.

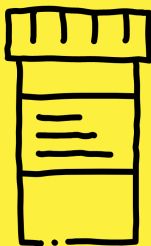


24%

find it difficult to afford the cost of their prescription medicine.



78% say drug companies making too much money is a "major reason" why people's health care costs have been rising.



29%

say they haven't taken their medicine as prescribed due to costs.



9 in 10

say it is important that Congress take action to reduce prescription drug prices in this session of Congress.



Why They Support Government Action

"The best reason to pass this bill is to ensure my family always has a fair chance to get the lifesaving medications they need."

"There should be a limit on how much profit a drug company can make on a particular drug or profit overall as a corporation."

"Patients may not take a drug (or skip doses) due to the high cost and this can be life-altering (impact health in a negative or even total way), so it is imperative we do the right thing and help people who are struggling. Profits are not more important than people."

"Every person in the US should be able to afford a medication a doctor says that he/she needs. Drug companies have the opportunity to make medicine affordable, have chosen not to. It is time to step in."

"This would improve people's quality of life if they do not have added stress or if they can afford medication that they need to survive. We shouldn't have to think twice about taking care of ourselves."



When Messaging about Drug Prices...

- Remember that voters are behind you. Speak with confidence.
- Know that your messages are stronger; voters see through Pharma messaging.
- Keep the focus on patients, make it human. Don't just attack Pharma.
- Give real life examples. For example, tell of a common drug that has seen a recent price hike – and about the impacts on a patient who relies on that drug.
- Remind voters that medications are often a matter of life and death.
- Messages that refer to drug companies as “monopolies” and are driven “only by their bottom line and their shareholders” have power.
- Use language that paints drug company pricing as “predatory.”
- Mention how much drug companies spend on advertising – this makes people mad, shows they have the wrong priorities.




Your Messages Are Stronger

“Pharmaceutical companies often have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to develop, test, and prove the safety of a single drug. This can take years, and many failed drugs never make it to market at all. While prescription drugs can cost a lot, that’s only because research and development is expensive. Without the money pharmaceutical companies make, we would see fewer treatments and cures to some of the most harmful diseases in our country.

vs

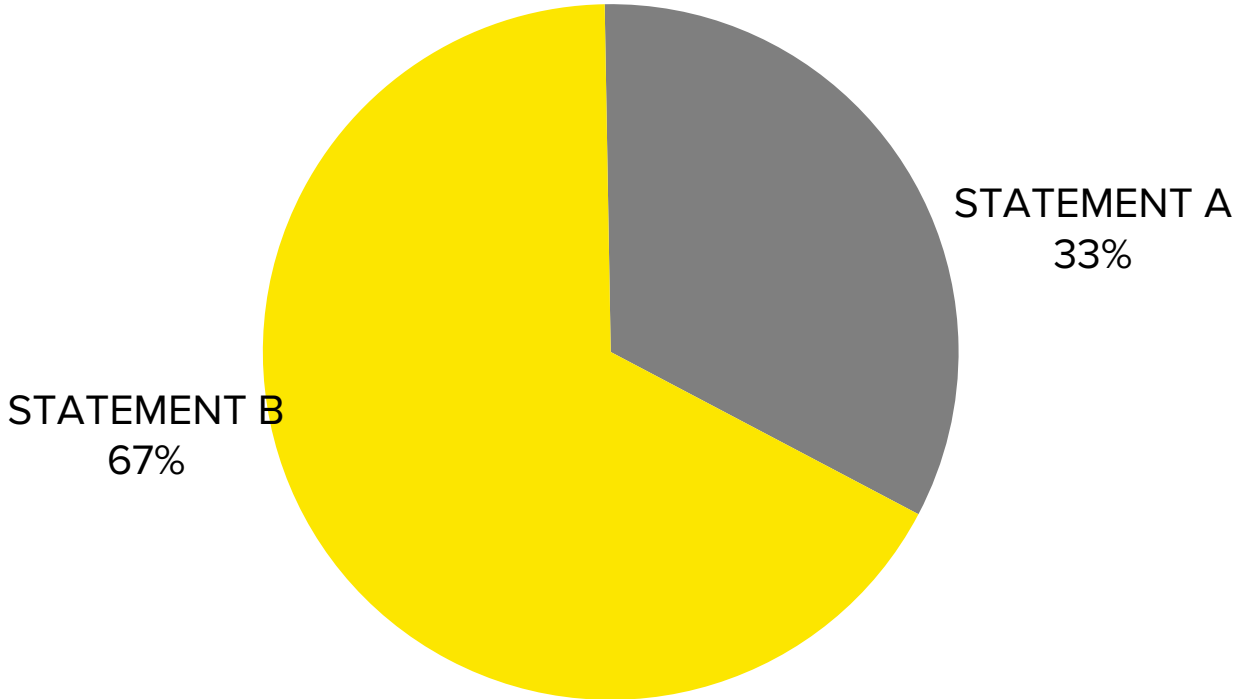
Much Stronger



“Drug prices are out of control. Drug companies charge whatever they can get for medicine that people need for their health or even survival. Even drugs that have been on the market for a long period can still see a big jump in price. Why is that? What we do know is that big drug companies make massive profits every year while also investing heavily in TV advertising. Companies spend more on marketing than they do to develop a drug. All of this is happening while millions of Americans struggle to afford their life saving medications every day.”



They Reject Pharma's Claim They Will Have Less Money for R+D



SOURCE: ([TheHill](#))

STATEMENT A: Government price controls significantly reduce investments in research and innovation which will slow down the creation of life-saving medicines.

VS.

STATEMENT B: Drug companies spend less on R&D than they do on advertising and administration and most research is paid for by taxpayers and done through universities or the National Institutes of Health.



Strong Message

“Medicines don’t save lives if people can’t afford them. For example, a recent treatment for Hepatitis C, a life-threatening condition, can cure most people, but also costs tens of thousands of dollars. For new treatments like this insurance may only pay for a portion of the costs or they may not be covered by insurance at all. This can mean that only the rich get a cure to a disease that affects everyone. Working people need the government to set basic limits that put necessary drugs within reach of those who need them most.”

Why It Works:

- Great first line. Gets to the core of the issue – people’s lives.
- Gives a specific, relatable example.
- Brings in inequity – only the rich can afford to pay out of pocket.
- Government setting “basic limits...” – not reaching too far, seems reasonable.



Strong Message

“Drug companies have a monopoly on patented drugs. Brand name drug companies can set high prices for each of their medications without competition from other companies. This means that drug companies do not have to justify the price and can charge whatever they want. Even with generic drugs, companies collude to eliminate competition and charge unaffordable amounts. Without competition, there can be nothing to drive costs back down. There is a limited ability for any entity – insurance companies, the state, or employers – to negotiate fair prices.”

Why It Works:

- Refers to drug companies as monopolies.
- Clearly lays out why prices are high – there is no competition.
- Makes the case for why government intervention is needed.
- Works for Republican audiences but not as powerful as the prior message.



Best Responses to Attacks

“STIFLE INNOVATION” ATTACK:

“Some people say that legislation that aims to lower drug prices would limit the ability of pharmaceutical companies to develop new and innovative drugs that could save people’s lives.”

RESPONSE:

“Drug companies spend more on advertising than they do on researching new drugs. The issue isn’t a lack of resources, it is a matter of priorities. If they wanted to, these companies could just move money from their massive marketing budgets to research and development and into new and innovative drugs.”



Best Responses to Attacks

“JOB KILLER” ATTACK:

“Some people say that legislation that aims to lower drug prices would kill jobs, because drug companies will lose sales and need to cut production.”

RESPONSE:

“Making drugs affordable is good business for the industry. By driving down prices, companies will see higher sales volumes for high-priced drugs in the state.”



Prescription Drug Affordability Board

Some feel this board sounds bureaucratic and inefficient (particularly conservative voters). For some, it makes the legislation seem like business as usual. They wonder if Pharma will be on the board.

Messaging Advice:

- Don't make the board prominent in messaging – it is just a mechanism to achieve goals.
- Rather, stay focused on what outcome the legislation is seeking – to reduce prescription drug costs for patients and add more transparency to pricing.
- If you have to talk about the board, describe who is on it so voters feel it is not just another blue-ribbon committee.
- If true, explain that patients/people will be able to give input to this board.



What to Watch Out For

- Low trust in government (mainly from conservative voters). “Government messes everything up!”
- Dislike of government regulation of private industry (conservative voters).
- About one-third are swayed by arguments about “less innovation” and fears their medications will no longer be available.
- Confusion over the role of PBMs and other middlemen who add costs to drug prices.



They Trust Groups That Represent Patients and Citizens Most

From “most
trusted” to
“least trusted”

Groups representing people with disabilities

Groups representing people with particular diseases

Non-profit organizations representing individuals

Groups representing older adults

Health centers

Doctors’ groups

Hospitals

Unions

Businesses or employers

Governor

State Senators and Representatives

Insurance companies

Pharmaceutical drug companies

